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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 23, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "House Mice." Information from the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The reason that we're going to talk about mice today is that one of our friends has asked us to. This friend says she heard our conversation about rats recently, and she wants to know whether what we said about rats applies also to mice.

Well, yes and no. Mice aren't the serious enemies to man that rats are, but I'll admit that a few of them in the house can do a lot of damage. A good deal of what we said about controlling rats applies also to mice. But the mice family and the rat family have some distinct differences, relatives though they are. The rat is daring and bold and aggressive, but the mouse is timid and retiring. Where a rat attacks, a mouse scurries to cover. In fact, the little mouse holds it own against the rat only because it can retreat into places too small for the rat to follow. Rats are keener and more cunning than mice, and therefore harder to catch. A mouse is very likely to step straight into a trap that his larger and more suspicious cousin has been carefully avoiding.

So the workers in the Bureau of Biological Survey, who know the ways of rats and mice, say that while poisoning with red squill powder is one of the best ways of controlling rats, traps are generally most satisfactory for house mice. And they suggest using the common little snap-trap with the wooden base and the trigger, since such a trap is both reliable and inexpensive. Their low cost allows any household to own a dozen or more -- as many as necessary to catch all invaders promptly.

Now about setting these traps for mice. You don't need to scald the traps each evening, but you must be sure to put in fresh bait and set them. Fasten the bait to the trigger. Then set the traps where the mice, in following their natural runways along the wall and behind objects wherever they can find concealment, will pass over the trigger.

Now about bait. The traditional piece of cheese is not the only bait that attracts a mouse. In fact, fresh bread and cake are often even more tempting to him. But you may vary bread and cake with cheese, bits of fried bacon, sardines, nut meats, even bananas. For an additional attraction, sprinkle rolled oats or cereal lightly over the trap. Mice like men have better appetites when they're offered a balanced meal. They like plenty of variety in their menu.

The construction of your house and the care of food in the kitchen and pantry has a good deal to do with your troubles with rats and mice. These animals can't get in rat-proof buildings with concrete cellars. And if you keep all food stored in tight containers and all your garbage and refuse in tightly covered rat-proof cans, mice and rats will be starved out.

Mice are very likely to enter your house through the drain-pipe hole under the kitchen sink. This little space allows them to get into the kitchen and back to the protections of the space between the walls. So if you're having mouse-trouble, stop up that hole with a little cement. Sometimes rats and mice gnaw the bottoms of doors to give themselves a runway from room to room. You can protect your doors by tacking on a straight piece of tin cut from a tin can.

Once in a while, you have the problem of making war on a large number of mice -- too many for trapping. In this case, you can sometimes use poison successfully. For poisoning, you can mix one-eighth ounce of powdered strychnine with an equal quantity of baking soda and stir it into a quart of rolled oats or oatmeal. You can leave this poisoned food in little open boxes in out-of-the-way places where it will provide a permanent poison supply available to the mice at any time they are hungry. But here's a warning! This poison set for mice is dangerous to cats and dogs and also children. Be sure that any such poisoned bait is plainly marked and kept out of the way of both children and pets.

What about using red squill powder for poisoning mice? Here is one situation where mice seem to be keener than rats. The menⁱⁿ the Bureau of Biological Survey say that mice do not take red squill readily as rats do.

So much for mice.... Now to answer a recent question from a lady who doesn't like bats and says they have a great habit of getting into her attic.

You may be surprised to learn that in spite of all the strong feelings and superstitions we human beings generally have against bats, the men in Biological Survey say that they are almost entirely beneficial. Of course, one reason that we dislike these "night-flying mice," as someone has called them, is that any place where they roost soon gets a strong very disagreeable odor. That's reason enough for not wanting bats in your attic.

Well, if you have the problem of driving out bats, you can often do it with the same material you use against clothes moths -- naphthalene, which you can purchase at your drug store either in the form of flakes or as the common moth ball. Flakes are better than balls. Scatter them liberally around the places where bats gather -- in attics or between double walls or other enclosed spaces. Usually from two to five pounds of flakes are enough to drive bats from their roost. Scatter more flakes after a week if necessary. Bats dislike the odor of naphthalene so much they'll usually leave any premises where they find it.

Sometimes you can shut bats out of an established roost in a building. Find all the openings they use. Then block up all these openings but one or two. Leave this open until after dark when the bats leave on their nightly search for food. When all the bats are out for the evening, close up the remaining opening.

